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# Introduction

## Welcome to the 2020 edition

For twenty-five years, *Sundays and Seasons* has been a trusted worship planning resource, guiding the church's leaders as they prepare for worship in their communities. Whether you are encountering *Sundays and Seasons* for the very first time or it has been essential for you for many years, you are welcome here! As it has been from the beginning, the Sundays and Seasons family of resources continues to support week-by-week planning for Lutherans with content and ideas shaped by the Revised Common Lectionary, the church year, and the assembly gathered around word and sacrament. Its robust family of resources includes the online planning tool, sundaysandseasons.com.

Since 2015 we have also published *Sundays and Seasons: Preaching*, an annual print resource that encourages and provides help for lectionary preaching, taking into account all the readings for the day, in addition to the rest of the service and the day itself in the church year. For each day, someone writing from the perspective of a scholar addresses the question, "What would I want my pastor to know about these readings, this day, in approaching the sermon-writing task?" And a practicing preacher—a different one for each day—provides ideas for ways to craft a sermon that compellingly confronts the worshiping assembly with law and gospel in the vital Lutheran tradition.

# New in 2020

In addition to the many dimensions of Sundays and Seasons you have come to depend on, the 2020 edition introduces three new features. In 2020 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of women's ordination. You will find "Remembering the Women," a thanksgiving at the table rich with references to biblical women on page 18. As other resources celebrating this anniversary will become available after this volume has gone to press, we encourage you to seek out materials being developed by the ELCA and Women of the ELCA in 2020. Second, the seasonal introductions this year were written by teams of writers, each author attentive to a specific area: preaching, intercessory prayer, assembly song, or worship space. This collaboration allowed for more focused ideas and reflection on these dimensions of worship. Finally, each Sunday and festival in the church year includes a section titled "Connections with Creation." This new section attends to how the lectionary, the church year, and the weekly gathering around word and sacrament inform our awareness and care of creation.

# With the whole church

This resource would not exist without the creative talents of many people across the church. Pastors, musicians, deacons, members of worship committees and altar guilds, seminary professors, and visual artists contribute their wisdom and ideas. They work full-time, part-time, or are volunteers in their churches. They serve large and small congregations and campus ministries in rural areas, small towns, cities, and suburbs in the United States, Canada, and abroad. They come from various cultural contexts and with different approaches to worship in word and sacrament. Over the past twenty-five years literally hundreds of people have contributed to *Sundays and Seasons*. Here's this year's group.

## Visual art

Gertrud Mueller Nelson (interior art) grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. She is an illustrator, author, speaker, and designer. Montessori, the domestic church, and Jung's psychology are often subjects of her lectures and writing. She has written and/or illustrated thirteen books including the best seller *To Dance with God* (Paulist Press, 1986). Best of all, she is the Oma of three grandchildren. Gertrud lives in San Diego. Christina Saj (cover art) has had a longtime fascination with spiritual objects and universal symbols. Using their formal and structural elements as a departure point, she creates paintings in which the symbols can be recognized and reinvented so they may reflect the character of the time in which they were created. Christina lives and works in Cedar Grove, New Jersey. www.christinasaj.com.

#### Annual and seasonal materials

Sonja Batalden (Advent/Christmas/Time after Epiphany worship space) is a nurse midwife working in a community clinic in St. Paul, Minnesota. She also loves to bring community and worship to life through creative communal art. Tracey Breashears Schultz (Easter texts) is bishop's associate for candidacy, call, education, and leadership in the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. She lives with her husband Chris

in the Houston Heights. Jessica Davis (Advent texts) is a Christian educator and chaplain for #decolonizeLutheranism. She lives in the Philadelphia area and received her MA in religion from the Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia. Joanne Engquist (Blessing of Animals) is lead pastor at Gethsemane Lutheran in Seattle. She gratefully serves in ministries that extend hospitality to the stranger, feed the hungry, and deepen both trust in God and love for others. Chad Fothergill (Lent/ Three Days/Easter assembly song) is a church musician and musicologist based in Birmingham, Alabama. Julie Grindle (Advent/Christmas/Time after Epiphany assembly song) is a lifelong church musician. She serves as director of music ministries at St. Mark's Lutheran in Baldwinsville, New York, and is the outgoing president of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. Jean Ely Grube (Lent/Three Days/Easter worship space) leads the arts and environment team at St. Paul's Lutheran in Dallas, Pennsylvania. She serves on the worship team of the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod. Paul Hoffman (Lent/Three Days/Easter preaching; Lenten midweek series) of Seattle is the author of Faith Forming Faith and is called by the Northwest Washington Synod as a writer and teacher. Ryan K. Hostler (Summer/Autumn/November assembly song) is an ELCA deacon and serves as the minister of music and worship at Our Savior in Vero Beach, Florida. His simple but profound calling is nurturing the song of the church. Mary Hinkle Shore (Preaching Matthew) is pastor of Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Brevard, North Carolina. **John Jahr** (Lessons and Carols for Epiphany) is director of music and organist at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Raleigh, North Carolina. Timothy J. Keyl (Summer/Autumn/November preaching) is pastor at Bethesda Lutheran in New Haven, Connecticut, and is director of the Lutheran Studies Program at Yale Divinity School. **Justin Lind-Ayres** (Summer texts) is pastor to Luther Seminary and Augsburg University in the Twin Cities and author of Is That Poop on My Arm? Parenting While Christian (Fortress Press, 2018). David Mennicke (Remembering the Saints) has been director of choral studies at Concordia University in St. Paul since 1989 and of the senior and men's choirs at Bethlehem Lutheran in Minneapolis since 1996. Jay C. Mitchell (November texts) is a baptized child of God serving as pastor of Christ Ascension in Philadelphia. Self-professed liturgi-geek and firm proclaimer of radicalwelcome, Jay loves connecting worship with what happens outside the doors. Craig Mueller (Easter Vigil as Culmination; Advent/Christmas/Time after Epiphany preaching) is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran in Chicago and is interested in the intersection of liturgy, preaching, virtuality, and outreach to the millennial generation. Joel Neubauer (Lent texts) is pastor of St. Mark Lutheran in Yorktown, Virginia. Jonathan Niketh (Time after Epiphany texts) has served as pastor of First Lutheran in Lynn, Massachusetts, since 2008 and is chair of the New England Synod's worship and music committee.

Jennifer Ohman-Rodriguez (Blessing for Seminarians) is a writer and early child development specialist. She is also pursuing a master of divinity degree at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Elaine Ramshaw (Summer/Autumn/November intercessory prayer) teaches pastoral care online for several different seminaries, meets with individuals for spiritual wayfinding, works at an art cinema, and gives out comic books at Halloween. Gail Ramshaw (Remembering the Women; "The Jews" in John's Passion), a Lutheran laywoman, studies and crafts liturgical language from her home outside of Washington, D.C. Elizabeth Rawlings (Advent midweek series) is pastor at the Sanctuary, the Lutheran Episcopal campus ministry to the University of Washington and co-founder/co-conspirator at Disrupt Worship Project. Imogen Rhodenhiser (Blessing of a Community Garden) serves at Christ Church, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. She is an avid runner, reader, and singer who delights in her spouse, their baby son, and their German shepherd mix, Vivian. John Roberts (script for the Vigil of Easter) recently retired after 41 years in pastoral ministry in California, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and metro Chicago. He has a lifelong interest in the arts and has brought those who are gifted in the arts to worship and the liturgy. Shelly Satran (Summer/Autumn/November worship space) is senior pastor at Faith Lutheran in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero (Autumn texts) is director of digital learning and lecturer at Graduate Theological Union, senior adjunct faculty at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, and a member of St. Mark's Lutheran in San Francisco. Miriam Schmidt (Advent/ Christmas/Time after Epiphany intercessory prayer) serves as pastor/priest of All Saints in Big Sky, a shared ministry of the Episcopal and Lutheran (ELCA) churches in Big Sky, Montana. Mary Shaima (Christmas texts) is a candidate for word and sacrament ministry who is passionate about worship that is both reverent and relevant. Her other passion is snow skiing. Rhoda Schuler (Advent wreath) teaches theology at Concordia University, St. Paul, serves as pro bono liturgist at Jehovah Lutheran, and became a liturgy geek as an undergraduate at Valparaiso University. Kevin Shock (Lent/Three Days/Easter intercessory prayer) loves to serve God's people at St. Mark Lutheran, Pleasant Gap, Pennsylvania, and animals at Centre County PAWS, where his spouse, Lisa Bahr, works. Sarah **Stadler** (summer blessings and prayers) serves as pastor at Grace Lutheran in downtown Phoenix, Arizona, where they try to practice liturgy in such a way that everyone understands that liturgy is truly the work of the people.

# Prayers of intercession

**Rebecca Ajer Frantz** serves as pastor at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran in Littlestown, Pennsylvania. She lives in nearby Gettysburg with her historian husband. **Jason Bense** serves as pastor of Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer and Gethsemane Lutheran, a two-point parish in Sacramento,

California. Melissa Bills is associate pastor of First Lutheran in Decorah, Iowa. Elle Dowd (she/her/hers) is a bi-furious seminarian at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago with deep gratitude to the places that taught her the most about justice and liberation: Sierra Leone and Ferguson. Andy Evenson serves as pastor of Christ Lutheran in Lake Elmo, Minnesota. He enjoys being a husband and father, as well as working on cars, fishing, and running. Erica Gibson-Even shares pastoral ministry at Christ Lutheran in Valparaiso, Indiana. These days she's pleased to have kids willing to enjoy nerdy books, games, and shows as a family. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni is an ELCA pastor studying full-time for her doctorate. She and her family live in Fort Collins, Colorado. Lydia Posselt serves Family of God Lutheran in Buckingham, Pennsylvania. In her free time she enjoys writing, traveling, reading novels, spoiling her two cats, and watching too much Netflix. Jim Rowe lives in Denton, Texas. He is a chaplain at a retirement and nursing community and a triathlon coach. He has served congregations in Michigan, Connecticut, and New York. Will Storm is a Lutheran pastor living in Saint Charles, Missouri. In his free time he enjoys the Sunday crossword with his wife, Erin, and walks with his dog, Moe. Michael Tassler is pastor of Grace Lutheran in Colorado Springs, where, if you don't like the weather-can't imagine why-just wait 15 minutes!

# Ideas for the day

Darla DeFrance is the founding pastor of Columbia City Church of Hope, a new ELCA congregation in Seattle, Washington. She lives in the neighborhood with her family. Marie **Duquette** is pastor of King of Kings Lutheran in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Pastor **Melody Eastman** serves Grace Lutheran in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. She also enjoys hiking, biking, and playing bodhrán and penny whistle at local trad Irish music sessions. Francisco Herrera writes theology and music, travels too much, wants to cook for you, and is SO DONE with being a PhD student. Email him at chicago.polyglot@gmail.com for kicks. Pastor Derek Hoven serves Salem Lutheran in Orlando, where he seeks to unleash people to share their gifts in the gospel with their community and the world. Pastor Jennifer Shimota Krushas serves the world God loves alongside the people of Emmanuel Lutheran in High Point, North Carolina. She is not at all convinced that supermarket aisles aren't really karaoke stages. Kurt Lammi is the pastor at St. Paul Lutheran on Dog Leg Road in Dayton, Ohio. His writing has also appeared in Living Lutheran and Christ in Our Home. Rebecca Liberty has served in congregations and campus ministries in the western United States and Maine. She is the director of the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue at the University of Maine in Orono. Becca Middeke-Conlin is the pastor of St. Paul's on the south side of Easton, Pennsylvania. She cohosts a podcast called Lit Liturgy on creative worship planning. Joel Nau is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran in Winterset,

Iowa. Katya Ouchakof is pastor of Lake Edge Lutheran in Madison, Wisconsin. She enjoys canoeing, knitting, Star Wars, the Bible, and her family. Alex Raabe is pastor of the spunky Oceanside Lutheran in Oceanside, New York. He loves creative worship, thuribles, cream soda, and believes that Christ calls us to love the world madly. **Keith Spencer** serves Trinity Lutheran in Pembroke Pines, Florida, as pastor, bread baker, and butterfly gardener. He is married to Piper and father to Christian, Thomas, and Luke. Photography is his passion. Will Storm (see prayers of intercession). Paul Walters is a Lutheran pastor serving in Troy, Michigan. He is husband and the father of three boys. Sir Paul is a Knight of Sufferlandria and a Moth Story Slam winner. Sara Yoos is a pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. She and her husband, Rev. Drew Yoos, have lived in five different states in the past five years.

### Connections with Creation

Siri C. Erickson is chaplain of the college at Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter, Minnesota, and director of the Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics. Scott Kershner is an ELCA pastor serving as university chaplain at Susquehanna University, an ELCA-affiliated institution in central Pennsylvania. Leah D. Schade teaches preaching and worship at Lexington Theological Seminary, Kentucky. She earned both her MDiv and PhD degrees from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary) and is the author of Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit.

#### Let the Children Come

Betsy Hoium is associate pastor for faith formation at Prince of Peace Lutheran in Roseville, Minnesota. Jennifer Ohman-Rodriguez (see annual and seasonal materials). Deaconess Claire Schoepp serves at Luther Memorial Church of Chicago where her desk is always piled high with markers, baskets, children's books, and sticky notes. Stop by for chocolate. Mark Spitzack is director of music at Olivet Congregational (UCC) in St. Paul and coordinator of perinatal and pediatric support projects for the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital.

## Music suggestions

Cheryl Dieter (psalmody) is business manager for the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. Andrew Donaldson (global) was coeditor of *The Book of Praise* for the Presbyterian Church in Canada and worked as worship consultant to the World Council of Churches in Geneva. He has given workshops on global song in many parts of the world, including Korea, Lebanon, Hungary, and Scotland. He and his wife Wendy live in Toronto, Canada. Sarah Hawbecker (children's choir) has served Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Atlanta

as organist and director of music for children and youth since 1996. Her greatest joy is watching her choir "kids" grow up and keep making music. Jane Irvine (handbell) has degrees in music education with 30 years' experience in the classroom. She rings with the Mid Ohio Valley Ringers and served as the handbell clinician for the 2018 Augsburg Fortress summer music clinic in Columbus, Ohio. Omaldo Perez (choral) suffers from a chronic condition known as "Cantoritis." The good people of Zoar Lutheran in Perrysburg, Ohio, do the best they can knowing his case is terminal. Nathan Proctor (keyboard/ instrumental) is organist and director of worship, music, and arts at St. John's Lutheran in Northfield, Minnesota. He holds degrees in church music and organ performance from St. Olaf College and Indiana University. Nathan is an active clinician, writer, and hymn festival leader. Justin Rimbo (praise/contemporary) is a deacon serving as the minister of worship at Living Springs Lutheran in Columbia, South Carolina. He loves his wife Angie, their kids Owen and Zoe, and their dog. Hilary Ritchie (praise/contemporary) is from St. Paul. She is the minister of worship and the arts at Hope Church in Richfield, Minnesota. Mark Spitzack (children's choir) is director of music at Olivet Congregational (UCC) in St. Paul. Scott Weidler (hymns) is musician at St. Stephen's Anglican Church and First Lutheran, both in Toronto. For 21 years he was program director for worship and music of the ELCA.

Special thanks to our summer 2018 editorial intern **Green Bouzard** for her many contributions to this volume. Green is a freelance musician, editor, and Lutheran Christian living, creating, and dreaming in Minneapolis. She also has the privilege to work day-to-day at Augsburg University. Green wrote some new day introductions and also reviewed and refreshed the entire set of day and reading introductions for year A—a huge task! She also provided editorial assistance with the prayers of intercession, ideas for the day, connections with creation, and let the children come content sets.

# You make it happen

Sundays and Seasons continues to be a collaborative endeavor each year. In our editorial conversations here at Augsburg Fortress we regularly evaluate the scope, format, and quality of the content provided in these pages. Your feedback—collected from you firsthand at events around this church, from postings in various forms of social media, from phone calls and emails to our sales and service representatives, and from surveyshelps us make decisions about how to adjust content so it is even more helpful. You, dear partners in ministry, make this resource happen. We welcome your ideas for future content, your suggestions for potential contributors (maybe you!), and your constructive feedback. Thank you for the trust you place in the changing roster of contributors who offer their time and talent to the whole church through Sundays and Seasons. Even more, thank you for the many and various ways in which you care for the Sunday assembly and its worship of the triune God.

-Jennifer Baker-Trinity and Suzanne Burke, editors



# **Preparing for Advent**

# **Preaching**

Preachers love Advent. Preparations for Christmas often stir up a combination of anticipation, anxiety, and excitement. The fact that the days are becoming colder and darker in many places brings other connections. Yet, Advent is the season that most honestly names and acknowledges our human condition of longing, waiting, and restlessness. Advent is usually seen in relation to Christmas, and though it is the time of year when listeners face the most distractions due to the many things on their minds and hearts, preachers have the unique role of being spiritual guides, providing time and space for reflection on key spiritual themes.

The texts of Advent can easily lead us into two traps: one in the past and one in the future. The prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures can cause us to pretend that we are waiting for Jesus to be born as he was two thousand years ago. The apocalyptic texts on the first Sunday of Advent can propel us into a distant future, wondering if and when Christ will come again to bring justice and peace to our earth. Though in many ways we are still waiting for the Messiah to come (again), and we need a healthy eschatology that trusts in God's promised future, liturgical preachers invite us to wake up to Christ's presence among us here and now. The Sunday assembly is the place we learn to recognize the Lord's coming week after week, but from there we go to behold anew this Advent coming in the events of everyday life—whether in the news or in our personal circumstances; whether frightening, confusing, or mundane.

The first Sunday of Advent is a particularly opportune time to speak of mindfulness and living in the present, even as the apocalyptic texts seem to name the end of the world at some time in the future. Year A is unique in that two of the passages (Matthew and Romans) speak of watching and waiting. In our age of instant gratification, the spiritual connections are many. Preachers might note the contemporary draw to yoga, meditation, and other spiritual practices that lead to an awareness of the present moment.

The human theme of longing resonates with all of us to some extent. We are always wishing we could delay aging, go back to a certain time in our lives and relive it, or live in an unrealistic ideal situation. In most cases, we fail to embrace fully the present and *what is*.

Images offer concrete ways to organize a preacher's reflection on Advent and daily life, and year A offers a plethora of riches: the peaceable kingdom (Isaiah 11 on Advent 2); the desert rejoicing and blossoming (Isaiah 35 on Advent 3); a farmer waiting in patience for crops to grow (James 5 on Advent 3); Emmanuel as God-with-us, even in the humble story of an unwed mother (Matthew 1 on Advent 4).

Advent puts before us this great mystery: we wait for what we already have. Preachers serve as spiritual directors, in a sense, inviting hearers to behold anew Christ coming again and again, Sunday after Sunday, day after day, not only in word and meal, but in the sacramentality of everyday life. There are abundant images to help preachers proclaim a word that has deep resonance with what it means to be human.

# **Intercessory Prayer**

Advent is a short season of waiting in darkness and longing for the light; thoughtful repentance and pregnant expectation; remembering, savoring, and hoping for God's coming. How might your assembly's prayers be subtly—or startlingly—shifted over four Sundays so the assembly might "awake" through their interceding?

Silence: Silence remains a challenging aspect of prayer for many North American Lutheran assemblies. We are not like those gnarled desert fathers and mothers who willingly stripped themselves of words and images in their quest to pray. Instead, we are uneasy with silence. We do not know how to wait within it. We forget that silence is not empty but full. And perhaps it is silence's fullness that challenges us. In silence, we might actually hear God speak, which—if we are anything like anyone in the Bible—would scare the dickens out of us.

What if in Advent we incorporated more silence into our interceding? We could omit any spoken assembly response to the prayers, advising the assisting minister to count to 30—or 50—following each petition. Or we could further limit the words we use, crafting short petitions—For the church. For the earth. For those at war. For our town. For the children in our community. For those who are dying—but in between those petitions allow silence to grow and take shape in the worship space, waking us up to a new way to pray.

Preparing the assembly for such silence will be necessary. This could be done in the worship folder, or orally by the pastor before worship.

Music: While some assemblies may be used to praying the intercessions with a musical refrain or with instrumental music providing an aural layer behind spoken petitions, this practice may be new to others. A line from an Advent hymn could form the assembly response to each petition (see the assembly song suggestions later in this introduction). Or an Advent hymn that will be sung this season could be played by an instrumentalist softly throughout the intercessions, coloring how the assembly conveys to God "our lament, our hope, and our thanksgiving" (Principles for Worship, Application L-16B). Music behind or throughout the intercessions may serve to wake us up and help us intercede for a needy world.

Gesture: Another assembly might "awake" to intercessions if its members are asked to join in a bodily movement or gesture during the prayers. This approach must be introduced with care, as mandating how to pray—Pray this way!—will not help anyone actually pray. But perhaps the pastor, or prayer leader, or a collection of the assembly's children could invite those gathered to pray during Advent using their bodies. This could be as simple as an invitation to kneel. Or the assembly could be invited to lift their hands and pray in orans. Or the assembly could be asked to turn to the four directions as petitions are made toward north, south, east, and west. People, places, and events associated with those directions could be named in prayer petitions.

Our bodies can easily be forgotten as we pray, but certainly—and all of the people in your assemblies who go to yoga classes know this—our bodies can aid our praying. Our bodies, after all, are who we are. It is in, with, and under those bodies that we intercede for the bodies in our world.

# **Assembly Song**

Advent has so many themes to explore, it can be overwhelming: longing, hoping, repenting, expecting; nighttime and the dawn of the new day; freedom and justice. How can this short season be meaningful without being overwhelming?

As you choose assembly song, fight the urge to schedule every hymn in the book, even though each is wonderful in its own way. Instead, read the lections; consider the direction the preacher is heading; examine your local context; and then look to the world and ask yourself: For these four weeks, what words can we sing that will bring new meaning to these themes? What songs can reshape our thinking so that we don't just sing about justice, for example, but learn how God wants us to be the embodiment of justice in our place and time?

"Canticle of the Turning" (ELW 723) has a powerful refrain for this new church year. While the stanzas of the hymn highlight different facets of the season, the refrain is easy to come back to week after week. It can be powerful as a sung response during the intercessions, and the stanzas can be used as a basis for those spoken intercessions. You could use stanza 1 as the gospel acclamation and stanza 4 as the response to the gospel. The hymn could also be used as the offering song or just prior to communion, as the assembly considers that the "hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn" (stanza 3). Always ask yourself, How does singing the words (perhaps multiple times) change us and help us embody the good news?

The beauty of this hymn (and others mentioned later) is that it can be sung and retained by the youngest to the oldest. It invites a sprightly tempo that can be accompanied by piano, organ, a rip-roaring fiddle, or, with some creativity, Orff instruments.

Another hymn that can be used in multiple ways is "Come now, O Prince of peace" (ELW 247). Its language fits liturgically as an Advent processional, sung as the procession enters and then encircles the assembly ("make us one body"); a Kyrie ("reconcile your people/all nations"); or an offering song, leading to the unity of eating the meal together. The Korean text is also provided, offering a chance for a soloist—a child, perhaps—to sing the hymn in its original language, uniting us with Christians all over the world. It can be accompanied with piano, organ, or bells, or left unaccompanied for a more haunting sound. You could also experiment with an aleatoric setting: with the help of the choir, have the assembly start singing stanza 4 at their own tempo as the procession reaches them, and then as they finish the stanza, have them hold the last note until all are done—an embodiment of unity.

Finally, consider hymns that can be used liturgically—you could select stanzas of "O come, O come, Emmanuel" (ELW 257) as an acclamation, in place of the Lamb of God, or as a call to worship. "Wait for the Lord" (ELW 262) could be sung as a response to intercessory prayer, with the ending pitches hummed underneath the intercessions. And "He came down" (ELW 253) can be sung joyously in full four-part harmony, swaying gently, while the Advent wreath is lighted.

# **Worship Space**

Not only does Advent mark the beginning of a new liturgical year, but it also opens this unfolding arc of the celebration of the incarnation from Advent through Christmas and into Epiphany. This new season offers us the opportunity to create a clean or refreshed canvas for our worship space. Advent is a pregnant time of waiting and watching. In some ways, we are invited into this fertile and growing darkness of Advent's womb, full of expectation for the unfolding of God's incarnation among us. Much as a pregnant woman tends to her health and environment in a new way when she is nurturing a child growing in her body, Advent affords a time to take stock and look

anew at our worship space. How does it create room in our communal life for the ongoing incarnation of God among us? This can happen in big and small ways. How can you change your space to make room for a new thing to happen there?

Here are some guiding questions to help you reflect on your space:

- Are there pieces of art or fixtures that could be moved or removed for the season to create space for either emptiness or a new thing? The defined period of Advent can be a perfect time to experiment with removing something for a short time to create a change.
- Could changing the orientation of assembly seating, the area for proclamation of the word, or the feasting table open up new ways to engage the space?

How can we reflect this growing and rich darkness among us as a space that can give birth to something new? Here are a few thoughts to spark ideas:

- Many churches use an Advent wreath during this season. Is there a way your community might *embody* the Advent wreath? For example, you could ask worshipers of different ages to process with the candle(s) each Sunday, circulate through the worship space, and then set the candle(s) in place. The procession grows as the season unfolds.
- Blue is a rich and beautiful color. Does your space allow you to simply hang blue fabric in a new place? Can it hang from the ceiling or cover a wall that does not usually change with the seasons to visually open up possibility? Could you cut the fabric into four pieces or have four different shades of blue, hanging a new piece/shade each week to create an unfolding in the worship space that mirrors the anticipation and growing depth of the season?
- Can blue fabric or paper be used to create "rivers of living water" (John 4:14; 7:38; Rev. 22:1) that may give rise to a "tree of life" (Rev. 22:2) to flower in the wilderness (Isa. 35:1-2)?
- Is that tree of life a simple birch branch or a tree cut from nearby woods, or is it a bare evergreen Christmas tree awaiting incarnation, highlighted by a blue backdrop?
- What can you do in your space to visually hold the Advent season in its beauty, growing darkness, and simplicity to create a space apart from the way our society prepares for Christmas with hectic days leading up to December 24?

A pregnant woman has the unique opportunity and invitation to take a step back and take stock of herself and her environment. How is she preparing herself and her community to welcome this new child? In a similar way, worship planners can take a step back and take stock. What are the critical pieces to reevaluate or change so there is healthy space to welcome new life?

### Seasonal Checklist

- Order candles and greens for the Advent wreath, or ask members of the congregation to make or donate these items. Consider a smaller, table-sized wreath for gatherings outside the principal worship space.
- Recruit volunteers of all ages to help prepare the worship space for Advent.
- Use the gathering song rubric in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to help you plan your Advent liturgy: "The time of gathering song may be brief or extended, and may include one or more of the following: hymns; psalms; a Kyrie; a canticle of praise" (p. 98). This carefully crafted instruction invites flexibility and creativity in the liturgy. If lighting an Advent wreath is the only thing you do that is unique to the season, let this invitation tap into new possibilities.
- Work with children's and family ministries to prepare resources that support household prayer.
- Encourage the use of the O Antiphons (versified in "O come, O come, Emmanuel," ELW 257) at home from Tuesday, December 17, until Monday, December 23. Sing the entire hymn on the fourth Sunday of Advent.
- Schedule time after the fourth Sunday of Advent to prepare the worship space for Christmas liturgies.



# March 1, 2020

# First Sunday in Lent

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

# **Prayer of the Day**

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

# **Gospel Acclamation**

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. (Matt. 4:4)

# **Readings and Psalm**

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

#### Psalm 32

Mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD. (Ps. 32:10)

## Romans 5:12-19

Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.

#### Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.

Preface Lent

Color Purple

# **Prayers of Intercession**

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. A brief silence.

God of the wilderness, we pray for the church. Lead us in showing grace and hospitality to all who struggle with doubt or shame. Make your church holy ground where all people can be seen and loved for who you have created them to be. Hear us, O God.

# Your mercy is great.

We pray for creation. Show your glory in deserts and on mountaintops. Nourish gardens and orchards and bless those who tend them. Forgive us for our desire to dominate creation instead of serving as faithful stewards and caretakers. Hear us, O God.

#### Your mercy is great.

We pray for the nations. Liberate leaders and governments from the temptation to exercise unjust dominion over those whom they are called to lead and serve. Hear us, O God.

#### Your mercy is great.

We pray for those in need. Sustain those who are hungry and alone, those who are anxious, those facing difficult decisions, and those facing a recent diagnosis or new grief. (*We pray especially for . . .*) Hear us, O God.

#### Your mercy is great.

We thank you for putting new songs on our lips and in our hearts. Hear our voices as we join in songs of lament and praise. We give thanks for musicians, composers, and poets (especially George Herbert; other musicians or music ministries of the local congregation may be named). Hear us, O God.

#### Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We praise you for bringing us through the desert into the promised land of your kingdom. We give thanks for saints who have guided us in times of trial and joy (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

## Your mercy is great.

 $\label{lem:condition} According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.$ 

Amen.

# Ideas for the Day

- The forty days of Lent echo Jesus' time in the wilderness as well as other sacred periods measured by forty. The season is also an echo of the forty weeks of human pregnancy. People who have recently been pregnant have probably experienced a version of the traditional Lenten discipline of fasting (from caffeine, alcohol, smoking) in the interest of providing safe gestational space for new life. How do we hold space for the new things that God is creating? What new life is growing quietly in the darkness while hidden from view? What is waiting to be (re)born in us and in our congregation or community?
- Although the Genesis reading may seem to suggest otherwise, curiosity is not the same as temptation. When Eve relays God's instructions to the serpent, she adds that they are not even supposed to touch the tree. The story snowballs in its interpretation, until we are not supposed to look at or even think about the tree. It is not a sin to open our eyes, pay attention, and ask questions. Unfortunately, many have formed an impression of Christianity that requires them to keep their mouth shut and pretend to agree as a form of piety and resisting temptation. In Jesus' temptation, he engages and argues against the tempter. How does our church community encourage active, engaged resistance rather than hiding from or denying temptation and evil?
- In a 2016 Seattle Children's Theater production of Maurice Sendak's classic *Where the Wild Things Are* (New York: HarperCollins, 1963), audience members were invited to participate in acting out the story: gnashing their terrible teeth as wild things, then stepping into young Max's role to command the chaos to "Be still!" Max's "wild things" as an embodiment of inner demons may resonate more powerfully for people today than cartoonish images of the devil. Just as Jesus renounced the devil three times in his temptation, in the rite of Holy Baptism we are invited three times to renounce the forces of evil (*ELW*, p. 229). If anyone in your congregation is preparing for baptism, what parallels can you lift up between Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and the rejection of sin in the baptismal rite and their own daily lives?

## **Connections with Creation**

The Greek word translated "desert" or "wilderness" names places beyond the scope of human habitation or agricultural life. These are forbidding places where human life is vulnerable, physically and spiritually. To sojourn in such places is to be brought to the limits of endurance. Though they may be forbidding for us, it is important to bear in mind that they are biomes with their own God-given ecological integrity, independent of human beings. Preachers might resist the temptation

to spiritualize or psychologize the idea of desert/wilderness in this text or to see it as simply the backdrop to the story of Jesus' temptation. Instead, one might explore the ways we commonly dismiss the value of ecological communities that we do not see as hospitable or having utility for us. The human tendency to reduce creation's value to its utility is itself a temptation to sin against the intrinsic value of God's good creation.

### Let the Children Come

The three classic Lenten disciplines are fasting, prayer, and works of love. To encourage children to participate in the offering and to understand how our gifts become signs of God's gracious love for others, place a large basket in the chancel and invite children to bring nonperishable food items to worship each week during Lent. While the offering plates are passed, let the children come and place their gifts in the basket. Keep a stash of canned goods for visiting children so they can participate as well.

At the end of the season, older children can sort, box, and help deliver these gifts to a local food bank. A Sunday school class could spend a Saturday afternoon volunteering there. In small ways like these, children learn what it means to be signs of God's presence, feeding the world with God's love.

# **Assembly Song** Gathering

O Lord, throughout these forty days ELW 319, LBW 99 Through the night of doubt and sorrow ELW 327, LBW 355 Your Heart, O God, Is Grieved ELW 602, LBW 96

## **Psalmody and Acclamations**

Helgen, John. "Psalm 32" from *ChildrenSing Psalms*. U, assembly, kybd.

Schalk, Carl. "Antiphon for Psalm 32" from PATP. Use with ELW tone 9 in Dmin.

Schwarz, May. "Psalm 32" from PWA.

(GA) Farlee, Robert Buckley. "Let Your Steadfast Love." MSB1 S421 with proper verse for Lent 1.

# Hymn of the Day

I want Jesus to walk with me ELW 325, WOV 660, TFF 66, LS 41 SOJOURNER

Let us ever walk with Jesus ELW 802, LBW 487 LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN

Lord Jesus, you shall be my song/Jésus, je voudrais te chanter ELW 808 LES PETITES SOEURS

## Offering

Come, ye disconsolate ELW 607, TFF 186 Tree of Life and awesome mystery ELW 334 (sts. 1-3, Lent 1)

#### Communion

As the sun with longer journey ELW 329, WOV 655 Now We Remain ELW 500, W&P 106 Strengthen for service, Lord ELW 497, LBW 218

## Sending

Bless now, O God, the journey ELW 326 Guide me ever, great Redeemer ELW 618, LBW 343

# Additional Assembly Songs

Crea en mí, oh Dios/Create in me a clean heart LLC 442 Forty days and forty nights H82 150, NCH 205, GTG 167 Satan, we're going to tear your kingdom down TFF 207

- © Cassina, Miguel/trans. Andrew Donaldson. "Tu fidelidad/I Depend Upon Your Faithfulness" from With Many Voices. U, pno. Binary Editions 9790900140104.
- South African trad. "Senzeni na?/What Have We Done?" from More Voices. SATB, cant. Wood Lake Publishing 9781551341484.
- Byrd, Anna/Kyle Lee/Michael Farren. "Wilderness" from CCLI.
- Foreman, Jon. "Your Love Is Strong" from CCLI.
- \* Hooper, Matthew/Richie Fike/Travis Ryan. "We Believe" from CCLI.
- ☼ Ingram, Jason/Kristian Stanfill. "This We Know" from CCLI.
- Moen, Don, "God Will Make a Way" from CCLI.
- Parker, Abbie/Adam Palmer/Matt Maher/Matthew Hein.
  "What a Friend" from CCLI.

# Music for the Day Choral

- P Hurlbutt, Patricia. "At the Cross." 2 pt mxd, a cap. AFP 9781451479317.
- P Sedio, Mark. "Take Us As We Are, O God." SATB, org. AFP 9781506426204.
- P Shute, Linda Cable. "Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days." SATB, pno. AFP 9781506452500.
- P Trinkley, Bruce. "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" from *Augs-burg Choirbook for Men*. TB, pno. AFP 9780800676834.

#### Children's Choir

Behnke, John A. "In Adam We Have All Been One/The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns." 2 pt, org. CPH 983886pdf.

Bender, Jan. "Begone, Satan" from *A Third Morning Star Choir Book*. 2 pt, org. CPH 974972.

Krentz Organ, Anne. "Follow Jesus." 2 pt, pno. AFP 9780800677428.

## Kevboard / Instrumental

Sostello, Michael D. "Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus" from God Will Guide You: Five Hymn Arrangements for Organ.
Org. MSM 10-620.

lacktriangledown = global song  $\lacktriangledown$  = praise song  $\lacktriangledown$  = available in Prelude Music Planner

- P. Sedio, Mark. "Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song" from Come and Praise, vol. 3. Org. AFP 9781506426327.
- P Wahl, Carol. "Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery" from *Cry of the Dove: Piano Settings*. Pno. AFP 9781451479614.
- P. J. Wilson, Terry D. "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" from *Near* the Cross: Piano Settings. Pno. AFP 9781506448053.

#### Handbell

- Behnke, John. "Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus." 3 oct, L2. CPH
- Edwards, Dan. "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." 3 or 5 oct, L2+. CG CGB383.
- \$\infty\$ Sherman, Arnold. "The Journey." 3-6 oct, L3+. HOP 1897.

# Sunday, March 1

# George Herbert, hymnwriter, died 1633

As a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, England, George Herbert excelled in languages and music. He went to college with the intention of becoming a priest, but his scholarship attracted the attention of King James I. Herbert served in parliament for two years. After the death of King James and at the urging of a friend, Herbert's interest in ordained ministry was renewed. He was ordained a priest in 1630 and served the little parish of St. Andrew Bremerton until his death. He was noted for unfailing care for his parishioners, bringing the sacraments to them when they were ill, and providing food and clothing for those in need. Herbert is best remembered, however, as a writer of poems and hymns such as "Come, my way, my truth, my life" (ELW 816).

# Monday, March 2

# John Wesley, died 1791; Charles Wesley, died 1788; renewers of the church

The Wesleys were leaders of a revival in the Church of England. Their spiritual discipline (or method) of frequent communion, fasting, and advocacy for the poor earned them the name "Methodists." The Wesleys were missionaries in the American colony of Georgia for a time, but returned to England discouraged. Following a conversion experience while reading Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, John was perhaps the greatest force in eighteenth-century revival. The brothers' desire was that the Methodist Societies would be a movement for renewal in the Church of England, but after their deaths the societies developed a separate status.

Charles wrote more than six hundred hymns, including "Hark! The herald angels sing" (ELW 270), "Christ, whose glory fills the skies" (ELW 553), and "Love divine, all loves excelling" (ELW 631).